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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3738
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1387
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0275
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3787
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM SPECIAL HANDLING MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 000550

SIPDIS

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DOD/OSD FOR FLOURNOY/KAHL/DALTON
DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN, BARGHOUT
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SY

SUBJECT: LEBANON: UNSCOL SAYS ISRAELI HANDOVER OF STRIKE
DATA TO GOL IS SIGNIFICANT

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Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams, and UNSCOL Poloff Rami Shehadeh briefed the Ambassador about the recent Israeli hand over of cluster bomb strike data to the GOL and provided a readout of Williams' May 8 - 10 trips to Israel and Turkey. Williams said issue number one for Israel is how to deal with Iran, noting that the outcome of the May 18 meeting between President Obama and PM Netanyahu will determine Israeli action towards Iran. Williams also speculated on future Israeli policy towards Lebanon after the June 7 parliamentary elections and discussed Syrian relations with a number of countries in the region. Williams also talked about recent meetings with Labor Minister Mohamed Fneish (Hizballah) and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. End Summary.

ISRAEL HANDS OVER CLUSTER
BOMB DATA TO LEBANON

2. (C) UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL) Michael Williams briefed the Ambassador and Poloff on May 14 about the Israeli hand over of cluster bomb strike data to the GOL and provided a read-out of his recent visits to Israel and Turkey. UNSCOL Poloff Rami Shehadeh also attended the May 14 briefing. Williams said UNIFIL Commanding General Claudio Graziano met with IDF Northern Commander Eizenkot in Israel on May 12, where Israel handed over cluster bomb strike data from the 2006 July War, which included the number, type, and location of munitions fires. The Israelis produced maps of the target coordinates from the three sources of primary delivery vehicles (aircraft, multi-rocket launching systems, and artillery), according to Williams. Privately, the

Israelis expressed their hope that this would help Lebanese "moderates" in the upcoming June 7 parliamentary elections in Lebanon and would help stabilize southern Lebanon.

13. (C) The Israelis said the information handed over was "comprehensive," but acknowledged that it may not be 100 percent accurate, given that the strikes occurred during wartime and not during an exercise, Williams added. UN Mine Action Coordination Center (UNMACC) Program Director Tekimiti Gilbert accompanied Graziano and told Williams that UNMACC's preliminary assessment was that the data was comprehensive and "significant." The data will help mine clearance operations and will help save lives, Williams noted.

14. (C) The Israelis hoped this would close the file on this issue and be reflected in the next UNSCR 1701 report (due around June 25), according to Williams. He said Graziano relayed all of this information to PM Siniora and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) Commanding General Jean Kahwagi. (Note: In a May 13 conversation with PolChief, PM Siniora's aide Roula Nouredine welcomed the news as a step towards 1701 implementation, but caveated that the Israelis were incriminating themselves for human rights violations and that the reason they decided to do this now was it was the least costly gesture of good faith they could make prior to Israeli PM Netanyahu's May 18 trip to Washington. End Note.)

15. (C) The LAF and PM's office both issued public statements on May 15 welcoming the news. They thanked the UN for its help in securing the strike data. Both offices noted that this information will help save lives and reduce the danger to Lebanese citizens. In the PM's press release, Siniora said he considers this step to be in accordance with UNSCR 1701. However, he criticized the Israelis for delaying the

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release of the information. The LAF said it will use the date to continue its work with the UN to clear mined areas.

IRAN IS FIRST AGENDA
ITEM FOR ISRAELIS

16. (C) Williams added that the first item on the Israeli's agenda is Iran. They want to hear how President Obama will deal with Iran, Williams said. Shehadeh opined that Israel would not want to hear more talk of negotiations and are looking for "firm action," otherwise PM Netanyahu will feel free to move on his own. Williams said the May 18 meeting with POTUS is "extremely, extremely, extremely" important to the Israelis, and will set the tone for future relations between the two administrations.

FUTURE ISRAELI
POLICY TOWARD LEBANON

17. (C) Williams also briefed the Ambassador on his recent May 10 trip to Israel, where he met with Deputy FM Danny Ayalon and MFA Director General Yossi Gal. Williams said Ayalon and Gal told him Israel was undergoing an intense review of policy towards Lebanon, which they expected to complete before Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's May 18 meeting with President Obama, where Netanyahu plans to brief POTUS of the policy.

18. (C) However, Williams speculated that Lebanon, while important to the Israelis because things are calm right now on the border, it is not a priority for them. Israel does not view the "moderates" in Lebanon as partners and might prefer a Hizballah victory because then, "things will be more black and white," according to Williams. However, in Williams opinion, the Israelis lack any clear policy towards Lebanon after the June 7 elections and Israel can not have comprehensive peace without a coherent strategy towards

Lebanon.

¶9. (C) Shehadeh noted that in meetings with Israeli academics and think tanks, some argued that if Hizballah is victorious in the elections, it will have a positive impact on the group by forcing it to moderate much like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and African National Congress (ANC) did after winning elections. The Israelis also plan to reiterate their concerns about USG assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), Williams noted. He said he plans to visit Israel again on June 1 - 2.

GHAJAR

¶10. (C) According to Williams the Israelis are committed to UNSCR 1701 and withdrawal from Ghajar, but the problem is how the withdrawal will occur. Israel will make a statement on Ghajar before the elections, Williams added. Williams said recent Israeli press reports that Israel would not withdraw from Ghajar if Hizballah wins the upcoming parliamentary elections were also a concern.

SYRIA'S RELATIONSHIP
WITH ITS NEIGHBORS

¶11. (C) During a May 8 visit to Turkey, Williams said, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu told him that the Turks believe Iran is unhappy with the Turkish role in Syria and that the Iranians told Hizballah to act during Gaza, but the

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Syrians told Hizballah not to. In addition, according to Williams, the Turks received clear messages from the Saudis that relations were "under strain" between Saudi Arabia and Syria (NFI) and that this tension will impact elections in Lebanon. Regarding the recent trip of Syrian Chief of Staff General Ali Habib to Lebanon, Williams said the visit "made sense" as many Lebanese have long complained that high ranking visits by GOL officials to Syria have not been reciprocated.

¶12. (C) The Turks also told Williams that they are ready to resume their mediation role between Syria and Israel, but they do not expect the new Israeli government will ask. During his Israel visit, the Israelis told Williams that the Olmert government's indirect talks with Syria were "stupid" and "short-sighted," since they had no assurances up front on either Hizballah or Iran. Williams added that he plans to visit Syria May 26-27.

ELECTIONS

¶13. (C) In a May 14 meeting with Labor Minister Mohamed Fneish (Hizballah), Williams said Fneish told him that no matter which side wins the elections, the margin of victory would be two or three seats only. Williams briefed Fneish on the cluster bomb data handover and stressed to Fneish that a compromise was needed over the issue of the Constitutional Court. Williams reiterated similar comments to the press in a statement after the meeting.

¶14. (C) Williams also noted that in a May 13 meeting with Parliament Speaker Berri, Berri told him that he and Saad Hariri discussed ways to resolve differences over candidates in the Beirut II district, however, Berri did not elaborate on the outcome of the talks. Williams added that Berri gave up on resolving the dispute between himself and Michel Aoun over candidates in Jezzine, and was angry with Aoun over this issue. Williams noted that Berri said the opposition would gain additional votes in the elections because of recent Israeli press reports that Israel would not withdraw from Ghajar if Hizballah wins the elections. Williams also issued public statements on these two meetings.

¶15. (C) Williams speculated that former PM Najib Mikati would be re-elected, if Saad Hariri turned down the position as some argue. Shehadeh said Saad would have to assume the role of PM if March 14 wins, or else his political clout may deteriorate as Sunnis may begin to view him as a weak leader.

Williams added that President Sleiman told him that he expects to have at least six MPs loyal to him in the parliament after elections. Regarding recent talk of expanding the powers of the President, Williams speculated that some type of March 8 - March 14 alliance may form to suppress such an effort if a move was initiated.

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